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ABSTRACT

Profiles are presented of six superior educators whose students achieved an excellence far beyond what might be expected of them. The subjects were a speech and drama teacher, a girls' basketball coach, a choral music teacher, an art teacher, and principals of an elementary and a secondary school. The major finding of the study was that, without exception, these leaders gave a high number of correctives. Any deviations, even minor ones, from their high standards were corrected quickly, and not infrequently very sharply. Other significant findings were: (1) they were purposive, demanding perfectionists; (2) they had a sense of humor and tended toward self-deprecation; (3) they gave only a limited amount of praise; (4) they stressed self-discipline, responsibility, and always doing one's best; (5) they attained a high amount of time on task; and (6) they were very family oriented. Comparisons are made between the characteristics of these educators and leaders in the business world. Recommendations are made for teacher and administrator education. (JD)

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FASTBACK

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Extraordinary Educators: Lessons in Leadership

Charles A. Reavis

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Extraordinary Educators: Lessons in Leadership

by
Charles A. Reavis

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The chapter sponsors this fastback in honor of its members — past, present, and future — on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the chapter's founding in May 1913. Members have given great service to their education systems and institutions, to their community, and to the chapter. It is with great pride that the University of Texas Chapter celebrates this 75th anniversary.

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Prologue

As the jet engines roared for take off, I settled back into my seat in the state of comfortable exhaustion that follows a successful conference. I had met some interesting people, my paper had been well received, and I was looking forward to a relaxing flight home. Suddenly my attention was riveted on a news item on the plane's television screen. It was a report on the Greenup County, Kentucky, cheerleaders, who had won the national cheerleading championships two years in a row and were favored to repeat for the third year. Shots of the school gym and surrounding area suggested it was a small rural school district, not unlike thousands of others scattered across this country.

I reflected on the statistical probability of these girls from a rural community winning a national championship three years in a row against teams from larger and more sophisticated high schools. It seemed incredible to me that these rural girls could be so consistently successful. Professor-like, I began to generate hypotheses that might explain this phenomenon. Could it be that a genetic pool in this rural area produced girls with superior jumping and shouting talent? Or were these girls superachievers? Or maybe these girls were quite ordinary but had received a level of instruction and training that allowed them to develop far beyond what normally would be expected.

I quickly discarded the first two hypotheses and decided to explore the third – that extraordinary educators could consistently attain superior performance from quite ordinary groups. It was to this research question that I devoted the next year of study.

Design of the Study

In establishing some guidelines for my study, I decided that I would seek out educational leaders who had produced consistently high achievement over several years in groups of average ability. Further, I decided that this achievement had to be verifiable by test scores, victories in competitions, prizes, or other forms of objective recognition, not merely by their reputation as good leaders. I secured a pool of 17 possible subjects from a poll of Texas superintendents, officers of professional associations, and the University Interscholastic League personnel (a statewide Texas organization that coordinates and regulates public school competitions). From this pool, I selected six individuals in the West Texas area in these positions: elementary principal, secondary principal, speech and drama teacher, choral music teacher, art teacher, and girls' basketball coach.

Data were gathered from personal interviews of the subjects, their students or teachers, and their colleagues; by observing them at work; and by collecting artifacts. Data treatment consisted of sorting and resorting the data gathered in an effort to find some unifying themes.

Naturalistic studies of this type produce an overwhelming amount of data from interviews and observations. The researcher's challenge is to organize them in a form that makes sense and, at the same time, to hold in check one's personal biases. My procedure was to record each bit of data on a card and then to sort and resort the cards in order to establish some behavior categories. There is margin for error,

of course, in trying to categorize human behavior. For example, there is a fine point in trying to distinguish a "corrective" from a "reprimand."

A further problem in this kind of study is that in seeking commonalities among these leaders, one may ignore their differences, giving the impression that these leaders fit a mold rather than being the fascinating mosaics they are. My solution to this problem is to record their statements verbatim, thus preserving the flavor of their individuality.

Admittedly, a study such as this is limited in that it reports the behaviors of only a few individuals, which may not be generalizable to a larger population. On the other hand, statistical studies using a larger sample of subjects are quite limited in helping us understand exactly what leaders do to achieve their results. To provide support for this study and to draw some contrasts, I shall cite findings from several studies using a larger sample of leaders from business and industry.

Profiles of Extraordinary Leaders

Elementary School Principal. This principal served a predominantly Hispanic school in which more than 70% of the pupils were on free or reduced lunch and were from single-parent families. Her school led its large urban district in standardized test scores the last seven years in a row. She kept close track of pupil achievement on a monthly basis and conferred with teachers and pupils when progress faltered. "Responsibility" was the key word in this school as captured in the slogan, "Great learning every day the responsible (name of school) way."

Secondary Principal. Before he became principal of this 90% minority school, it had been plagued by poor student/teacher morale, poor attendance, low achievement, frequent fights and theft, and high teacher turnover. Six months after he arrived, the school held a "Celebration of Excellence" attended by 2,000 community members. Within two years all indices of school success improved, sometimes

dramatically – math achievement test scores jumped 22% in one year. He has built a coalition of teachers and students based on clearly stated school goals, which he constantly reinforces. His belief in people is summarized in his statement: "Everyone wants to do the right thing."

Speech and Drama Teacher. This teacher's students have won six national drama competitions in the last eight years. During the year this study was conducted, his students entered 13 tournaments and won 13 sweepstakes (first place). Far from skimming off the "stars" to achieve his dominance in his field, he stated that he preferred to work with students of average ability because, "The ones with the most talent don't work the hardest."

Girls' Basketball Coach. During his coaching career, his win-loss statistics were 823-134. He has worked in three districts and has quickly produced winners in each. Interestingly, very few of his players go on to play college basketball. He has been told that his players are as good as they will ever be, and that colleges want talent that can still be developed.

Choral Music Teacher. Her students were typical of those found in any high school. They represented various ethnic groups and most were from working-class backgrounds. Her approach to working with students was revealed during a discussion with her substitute, who was to rehearse the chorus for a few days. In concluding their discussion, the substitute said, "In other words, pound, pound, pound." "No," the chorus teacher responded, "I hate to have them pound. It is better to build than to destroy." Nevertheless, her school regularly "pounds" other schools in competitive choral meets.

Art Teacher. In the Scholastic Art Awards exhibit just prior to this study, his students took 29 gold ribbons, while students from five other high schools received a total of only 25. He told me he was lucky because he had the "perfect school situation." When I asked him why, he explained that his school district had built a new high school five years before and it had taken many of the silk-stocking pupils, leaving his school with a lower socioeconomic mix. Many

teachers would have considered this a disaster; yet for this teacher it was the "perfect school situation," and his students continued their winning ways.

As a personal observation, I admit that I entered this study with a certain bias. Considering the high levels of achievement of their groups, I expected that the leaders might be stern, drill-sergeant types with little time for nonsense. Given the intense effort expended to reach such high levels of achievement, I thought the students might be high-strung and tense. Instead, I found a wholesome relationship between leader and led. These were individuals with a love for their area of achievement and a commitment to developing such attitudes as thinking for oneself, self-discipline, and demanding the best of oneself – attitudes that would last far beyond momentary triumphs. Rather than driving, Type A taskmasters, I found friendly leaders concerned about the personal lives of their students (problems with parents, boy friends, girl friends), and focused on life skills for their charges, not merely on the short-term goal of winning the upcoming competition. The speech and drama teacher put it well, "I tell them to have a good time. Once you realize there is luck and chance, the winning isn't that important."

By the end of the study, I knew that I would cherish the opportunity for my own children to be under these leaders' tutelage. I also learned that their effectiveness is rooted in behaviors accessible to us all. Thus, I set out to write this fastback to offer some guidelines for working with students and colleagues and to encourage educators to seek excellence in all their charges, not just the talented few. Further, I hope that those responsible for the preparation of teachers and administrators will find encouragement here to break out of the bounds of conventional preparation programs. The most compelling message from this study is that under appropriate leadership, groups of very ordinary ability are capable of producing far more than they, or we, suspect.

The Major Finding*

The major finding of this study is that, without exception, these leaders gave a high number of correctives. Any deviations – even minor ones – from the high standards expected were corrected quickly and, not infrequently, very sharply (this last was more true of teachers than principals). Persistent use of correctives provided students with successive approximations of the desired performance. Some of the correctives were quite direct and blunt. Others were indirect, but left no question about what changes were required. Below are examples of both direct and indirect correctives:

Direct Correctives:

"Part of you are not making your F#'s."

"No! You're not going to breathe there."

"Sing*ing*" (She accents a word the way she wants students to accent it).

"You're petting it (basketball) rather than slapping it." "Slap that thing, and spread your hand to strengthen your grip."

"Come on girls, we don't have all day. This is a 3 on 2 situation. Push it. Push it."

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*Throughout this discussion, reference is to teachers and their students because four of the six leaders studied were teachers. However, the reader should understand that the two principals in the study generally interacted with teachers (and with students to a lesser degree) similarly, except where noted.

"All you have to do is put your foot on the back line (demonstrates). It's not asking that much of you."

"You've made two of these now (rings), and they are getting easy for you. Maybe try a band with two coming around intertwining like a vine."

"Take out a triangle here and there – selectively, though."

" 'Skin of our' (teacher pronounces carefully) Watch your Texas accent."

"Calm yourself, calm yourself."

"The first time your character didn't have an accent, the second time she did."

Indirect Correctives:

"Where was the girl playing her? Here! Where is the basket? There! Now, where should you be?"

"What was that shot?"

"Can you change your eye focus?"

"What do you see as weaknesses?"

"How do you see Sabrina?"

"Are there too many examples?"

"How much do you think we could improve math test scores?"

In all observations the direct correctives outnumbered the indirect, sometimes as much as ten to one. All observations revealed a high number of correctives, on occasion accounting for almost 25% of the total teacher talk.

The surprise to me was that these students of average ability were able to accept correction without becoming tense. Considering the high number of correctives, such as those quoted above, one might expect students to be anxious and afraid of making mistakes, particularly given the highly competitive situations in which they were engaged. Instead, I found in my interviews with students (and teachers in the case of principals) that they possessed a quiet confidence, a certainty that they were the best. That theirs was not a hollow pride

was proven time and again in the heat of competition. This confidence and pride was apparent in their comments about their leaders:

"He lets you know you can do it."
"She tells you it's important. You feel good about what you're doing, no matter what the judges say."
"He's pointed things out to me, and I can see them in other performances."
"He gripes at you about everything, but he's trying to pull all of your potential out of you."
"She teaches you the minor things that are really important."

Why did the frequent and forceful use of correctives produce confidence and pride rather than anxiety and self-doubt? The answer is found in several associated factors, which are addressed below.

1. *The leaders first identified areas in which their students have a strong interest, and only then did they begin to demand perfection.* Depending on the discipline, the teacher might identify a musical or dramatic selection (choral teacher, speech and drama teacher), a skill (art teacher), or a strategy (girls' basketball coach). For example, the girls' basketball coach said, "I'm known as a defensive coach. If I had girls who were fast, I'd run them and score 70 points a game. But my girls can't do that and win. I'd rather score 50 points and hold the other team to 29-30."

2. *The leaders were experts in their disciplines and stayed current.* That the students were well aware of this expertise is evident in their comments:

"He knows what he's doing."
"You know it's right."
"He knows what needs to be done." (and from another student who was present) "That's right! We always know he's right!"
"We're in awe of her."

These leaders' expertise was demonstrated more in performance than in academic areas per se. They were able to make fine distinctions in the performance of their students, showing them, for example, what

excellent choral music sounded like or what excellent art looked like. Their performance orientation, however, was used frequently to give students an academic understanding of the discipline. For example, students of the art teacher said, "He makes you use the right terms. You can't say 'that black stuff'; you have to say 'iron oxide'." The music students said, "We learn musicality. We can tell a good from a bad choir. Everyone knows what to listen for." The students respected their teachers' expertise; and rather than taking correctives as trivial nit-picking, they understood that they were the fine points that made the difference between modest and substantive achievement.

3. *These leaders used their expertise to free their students.* Far from making clones of their charges, they used correctives to free their students to think. Depending on whether it was a team/group activity (chorus or basketball) or an individual activity (art or public speaking), this freedom took different forms. For example, the girls' basketball coach said at one point in practice, "I can't tell you where to go, you have to understand the game." A student said about the art teacher, "He makes you work your mind." Both principals reported they did not have a standard instructional approach (such as mastery learning or the Madeline Hunter model). Rather, they set clear goals and allowed teachers latitude in reaching them. The elementary principal, for example, freely admitted to winking at mandated time requirements for various subjects, saying, "The results speak for themselves." At the same time, these principals knew what each teacher was doing and provided support where needed. Discussing the speech and drama teacher, a student said, "He always lets you know you are important. It's important that you feel good about what you're doing, no matter what the judges say." However, this teacher's approach was far from a "feel good" philosophy. His students' growing understanding of the discipline made them demanding taskmasters of themselves, which was reflected in their performances.

4. *The leaders provided support and encouragement.* Students commenting on this characteristic reported, "He cultivates the person with-

in; lets you know you can do it." "She tells you that you already know how to do it – all you have to do is let it out." The secondary principal was aware of the successes of students and was always ready with a word of praise for them and their teachers. The choral music teacher had posters around the rehearsal room with such messages as "I believe in you today and every day," "Make a commitment to accomplish something today," "Be positive; you can if you want to," "Turn your faith into action." All of these leaders displayed in their classrooms or offices mementoes of past successes – trophies, awards, photos of winning teams. The choral music teacher had along one wall of the rehearsal room a banner with the words. "L.H.S. Choirs: a History of Excellence," and under the banner were the plaques they had won in choral competitions over the years.

5. *These leaders had an unshakable faith that their charges could do far better than they themselves realized.* This faith translated into never giving up on a student or group of students. A teacher phrase students frequently reported was, "I know you can do it." This phrase was used not as a form of cheerleading but more as a challenge to higher performance. The students' response seemed to be: "If he thinks I can do it, then I must be able to because he knows his stuff." These teachers threatened, they cajoled, they encouraged, they inflicted guilt, they introduced competition ("George has already completed two projects for the exhibition"). But they never gave up. Never.

6. *The leaders genuinely cared for their charges and communicated this caring.* One of the ways of demonstrating caring is to spend time with someone. All of these leaders spent much time with their students – 10-hour days were not unusual. In addition to the time spent, the leaders involved themselves in the personal lives of their students or teachers, counseling them on problems with parents, boy or girl friends, or just "figuring things out." They further involved themselves to the point of specifying standards of behavior. For example, the girls' basketball coach did not want his girls engaging in affectionate behavior with their boy friends in school hallways. The art teacher

inquired about a boy no longer in school, wondering how he was getting along. The elementary school principal stressed responsible behavior that extended beyond merely obeying school rules. The one overriding rule of the secondary school principal was that students should conduct themselves as ladies and gentlemen. Indeed, this personal involvement was so pervasive that students often referred to these leaders as "Mom" or "Dad." A secondary teacher described the principal as, "like an elephant leaning on you. You know the direction he wants you to go, and he just keeps leaning until you head that way."

Most adults (and teenagers, too) would resent such intrusion into their personal lives. So why was it accepted from these leaders? These leaders seemed to be able to show the link between high performance and standards of personal conduct. The secondary principal, for example, in insisting on professional attire for his faculty, stated, "For most of our kids the only role model for professional dress they will have is teachers. If they are ever to have a chance to make it into the mainstream, they have to have everything going for them." When talking about his insistence on high character, the girls' basketball coach said, "In a close game it is the team with high character that will win most often."

When considered separately, the six factors discussed above may not seem sufficient to account for the achievements of these leaders. But in combination with the findings reported in the next chapter, a compelling synergistic effect is created.

Additional Findings About Extraordinary Educators

While the use of correctives together with associated behaviors reported in the previous chapter seem to be the most potent factors contributing to these leaders' achievements, the findings reported in this chapter are no less significant. When all of these factors are combined, these leaders are able to elicit consistently high performance from groups of very average ability.

1. *The leaders were purposive, demanding perfectionists.* In interviews, students reported: "He pushes you to do your best," "She is challenging, demanding, tough," "He knows when you are not doing your best and guilt-trips you," "He lets you know others are moving ahead of you." The girls' basketball coach, describing himself as a disciplinarian and perfectionist, offered this thought, "Practice doesn't make perfect; *perfect* practice makes perfect." Talking to her chorus, the director said, "You're going to bust your kazoos to get this perfect." At the request of the secondary principal, the math faculty adopted a goal for improving math achievement scores by 8%. This would be an impressive one-year gain in a school with a history of falling test scores. However, the principal rejected this as too low and instead proposed a goal of 30%. The next year's scores revealed a 22% gain! Not quite what the principal asked for, but much more than the faculty thought they could achieve.

When asked to compare the teachers in this study with others they had in the past, students reported on those that were too easy, "She

would give in to us; she never gained our respect." Describing a "tough" teacher for whom they wouldn't work, they said, "She acts superior and acts like you are inferior," "She wants you to do it for her, not for yourself." Students know when they are not doing their best; and although they may complain mightily, they respect those who demand the best in them.

2. *These leaders had a sense of humor and tended toward self-deprecation.* Their demanding perfectionism was softened by their sense of humor and their caring attitudes. This took different forms, to be sure, depending on the personality of the leader. For example, the speech and drama teacher, commenting to a student about my presence, said, "I'm going to demonstrate to Dr. Reavis how I beat you into submission." On another occasion the teacher told a disruptive student to remain quiet until the end of the period. The bell rang and the student grumbled, "I'm safe!" The teacher shot back, "But are *we* safe?" The elementary principal was not above clowning, she had a stuffed bear that she presented to a class that was doing particularly well.

3. *These leaders gave only a limited amount of praise.* The number of correctives far outweighed the amount of praise. While they continually prodded students to higher levels of performance and assured them they could do it, the students reported (and observation confirmed) a small amount of direct praise. Walberg (1974) has commented on this phenomenon, suggesting that perhaps a small amount of praise from one known to have high standards has more impact than repeated, undifferentiated praise.

4. *These leaders stressed such attitudes as self-discipline, responsibility, and always doing your best.* By linking their demands for high performance with these personal attitudes, the leaders instilled a sense of commitment in their students. Asked what they would take away after all of the excitement of competiton was over, students used such phrases as "self-discipline," "responsibility," "how to deal with pressure," "setting high personal goals," "team work," "always do your

best," "don't settle for less." In all my observations, I never heard a leader say anything remotely like, "Do this now because it'll be good for you later in life." Students seemed to understand this intuitively.

5. *These leaders attained a high amount of time on task.* They devoted many extra hours to their work, and their time in the classroom was almost always used productively. For example, the girls' basketball team came out from the dressing room and immediately began drills. There was no random "throwing the ball up" until the coach appeared. The choral music teacher moved her students quickly through a number of pieces. Art classes can easily settle into time-wasting activity; but the art teacher kept his students on task by moving around, asking questions, probing, prodding. The large, mostly minority secondary school of the principal in this study was impressive in its quiet, business-like atmosphere – even during passing periods. Very little horseplay was evident and no roughhousing. In classrooms the students were quiet, attentive, and engaged.

6. *These leaders, despite their demanding jobs, were very family oriented.* While I am not sure about the implications of this finding, it cannot be dismissed. Family members participated in the student activities these leaders directed, for example, going to tournaments, exhibitions, and basketball games. Typically, spouses would take on some responsibility, such as helping with the details of running a tournament. All of the leaders indicated that having an understanding and supportive family was important because of the time commitment required to do their jobs. Time not spent on the job was devoted to their families.

If you were to interview these leaders as I did, you would be impressed by their warmth, their self-deprecation ("I'm lucky to have such good students"), their easy manner, their honest self-assessment ("I'm a tough old bird," "I'm a disciplinarian," "I'm a perfectionist"), their love for their subject, and their love for their pupils ("I'm a people person," "I love kids," "I teach kids, not art").

If you were to observe them in action, you would see them move students quickly through several activities, interrupting often to make

correctives. After every few correctives, they would alternate between assuring students they could do it or issuing a reprimand ("No, you're not thinking – THINK!"). They would encourage students to test their own abilities ("Don't copy me. *You* have to feel it"). They would use technical vocabulary so students would become familiar with the terminology of their discipline. They would make frequent mention of the need to practice and work hard. Before and after class, they would talk with individual students about their performance or personal problems. At these breaks they would be arranging for individual practice sessions after school.

For the principals, their interactions with teachers typically were on the run rather than in formal meetings. But the same characteristics described for teachers also were present. At a hall conference with the principal, usually the teacher would be reminded of a goal, assured she could reach it, reminded of progress she had made, encouraged to think about what else could be done to improve achievement, and assured of support from the principal.

Much has been written about high-achieving leaders in business and industry. How do the leaders in my small study compare with these studies using large samples? Are the leader characteristics similar? Different? Are the conditions for exercising leadership different for schools and business? It is to these questions that we turn our attention in the next chapter.

What Research Says About High-Achieving Leaders in Business and Industry

In order to compare the findings from my study of six extraordinary educators with findings about leaders in business, I undertook a review of studies that used a much larger sample. At the outset, let me state that comparisons between leaders in business and industry and those in education must be approached with care. There are substantial differences between the two institutions.

Business leaders have control over most of the factors needed to produce results (raw materials, labor, sales, design, research, production). They have specific products or services, whose value is determined in the marketplace. They produce a uniform product or service. They are free from the whims of public financing and control (although the public exercises control in the marketplace). They have a clear-cut "bottom line" by which their performance is judged, and a quarterly or annual financial report provides the profit-and-loss statement.

Education leaders have almost none of these factors in common with business leaders (a few may be applicable in a very narrow sense). On the other hand, the leadership demands of both groups are similar. Both accomplish results through the efforts of others, whose commitment and loyalty vary greatly. Both must negotiate between contending factors to achieve organizational progress. Both are expected to initiate and sustain change. Both have to make decisions and take action before all variables are known or settled. And they both have to satisfy the public.

With these differences and similarities in mind, I shall summarize six well-known studies of leaders in business and industry and compare their findings with those of my small study of six education leaders. The six studies are:

The Change Masters by Rosabeth Moss Kanter. Kanter studied the organizational and personal factors that enable some individuals to be highly effective in inducing change.

Leaders: Their Strategies for Taking Charge by Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus. Bennis and Nanus studied 60 chief executive officers recognized for successfully leading their organizations through "spastic and turbulent conditons." Their organizations not only survived these unsettling periods, they thrived.

Vanguard Management by James O'Toole. By polling more than 200 informed professionals, O'Toole identified 16 companies as the best-managed large corporations in America. He then interviewed the leaders of these corporations and observed them in action in their offices and factories.

Peak Performers by Charles Garfield. In reporting the results of his 18-year study of peak performers in business and industry, Garfield concluded, "extraordinary achievers are ordinary people who have found ways to make a major impact."

Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations by Bernard Bass. This study of 176 military officers is different from the others in that Bass used factor analysis of questionnaire responses to identify two types of leaders: "transformational" and "transactional." Transformational leaders encourage subordinates to perform beyond expectations, whereas transactional leaders exchange valued things (reward for good work) to increase productivity. Bass concluded that charisma by far explained most of the transformational leader's power to influence subordinates to perform beyond expectations.

In Search of Excellence by Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman. The authors studied the management of 43 companies that met their selection criteria, which included long-term wealth creation, return

on capital, and sales over a 20-year period. Their book hit the best-seller lists when it was published in 1982 and continues to exert a strong influence in the literature about leadership.

In reviewing these studies of leaders in business, I found it necessary to take some liberties in describing behavior characteristics because the authors do not use the the same terms but are talking about the same thing. I assume Kanter's "Visionaries," Bennis and Nanus' "Vision," O'Toole's "Purpose," and Garfield's "Personal Mission" to be the same or a very similar construct. I have taken a further liberty by collapsing several terms used by an author into one term. For example, Kanter's "teamwork," "consensus," "communication," and "information" were all subsumed under the category "collaborative style." These "rounding off" procedures may not do full justice to specific points the individual authors make. However, I took care to preserve the essential elements of each author's work. Below I will review leadership characteristics from these studies and compare them with the findings from my study. In general, the teachers and principals in my study exhibited most of the characteristics found in studies of leaders in business, with principals exhibiting slightly more of these than teachers. Since most of these education leaders' characteristics were detailed in earlier chapters, I shall comment only briefly on them here.

Vision. Vision is the ability to see beyond what is to what could be. This vision of what could be transfixes leaders; they are quite persistent in pursuing it, and they communicate it in compelling terms. All studies except the Bass study found this leadership characteristic. While the education leaders I studied also exhibited this characteristic, teachers differed from principals and business leaders in the way they fashioned that vision. The teachers' vision stems from their expertise in their discipline, whereas the principals' vision developed as they asked questions and listened (as was also true for business leaders). Teachers may do less listening because they are more mature than their charges, are experts in their field, and know what needs

to be done to be successful. Teachers tended to exhibit tangible evidence of their vision (trophies, photographs of successful groups, posters with slogans), whereas principals tended to state their vision in simple statements: "Students are here to learn." Yet, this statement gave purpose and direction to most of the school activities – discipline, use of time, teacher behavior, and so forth. More than simply following standard practice, vision points followers to a higher purpose, motivates them, and focuses their energy.

Collaborative Style. This characteristic is shown by valuing and trusting others and giving wide latitude to one's subordinates. Principals and business leaders shared these qualities; teachers did not. Teachers' lack of a collaborative style is probably explained by the fact that they have considerable expertise and that their charges are young and inexperienced. Nevertheless, teachers did value the individuality of their young charges and did allow them limited latitude to think and develop their own interpretations or styles.

Optimism, Accepting Failure. Leaders in business and in my study shared these paradoxical characteristics. They always expected to win, to be the best. They pursued this goal with relentless energy. Yet, they accepted losses as inevitable and helped their students learn from their failures.

Longer Time Horizon. This was the single factor that neither teachers nor principals shared with business leaders. The secondary school principal held a "Celebration of Excellence" six months after he was appointed principal. The teachers and their students began winning tournaments as early as the first year of the teachers' careers. This attribute is probably not as appropriate for education leaders.

High Moral Purpose, Fairness. Although this characteristic was noted only in O'Toole's study of business leaders, it was very evident in my study of principals and teachers. For both teachers and principals, the goal of winning was subordinate to the development of character and lifelong attitudes about personal conduct. The students were quick to distinguish between teachers who drove students to work

hard in order to satisfy the teachers' own egos and the teachers in this study who were dedicated to the best interests of the students.

High Aim. Although this characteristic was explicitly mentioned only by O'Toole and Peters and Waterman, one would assume that all high achievers have a commitment to be excellent in all that they attempt. The surprise is not so much that I found this drive for perfection in my school leaders as that this goal could captivate large numbers of average students.

Results Oriented. High-producing leaders in business and in my study distinguish between effort expended and results produced. For example, the elementary principal was much more concerned about the progress pupils were making than on whether a particular time allotment was given to a curriculum area. One distinction that is made in leadership literature is that managers do things right; leaders do right things. As legislative mandates have multiplied, it is understandable how school leaders are diverted from producing results simply in order to follow prescribed procedures. Too often, running a smooth ship replaces having a ship with an important cargo reach its destination.

Intellectual Stimulation. While this characteristic was specifically mentioned only by Bass, it was clearly a characteristic of my leaders. Students reported, and my observations confirmed, that they were challenged by tough, difficult work that stretched them and that they also were encouraged to think, to use their minds. Such intellectual stimulation motivated them to higher levels of effort and achievement.

Contingent Reward and Management by Exception. These two characteristics were evident in Bass' transactional leaders. He found that transactional leaders, who used some form of contingent reward (reward given soon after desired behavior is exhibited), were not successful in obtaining exceptional performance from their subordinates. But we must be careful here in interpreting rewards, because Bass' transformational leaders and the leaders in my study did give their subordinates substantial rewards through their success. The issue here

is that the reward alone is not sufficient to command sustained dedication over a period of time. The high number of correctives my leaders used might appear to be an example of the transactional leader who manages by exception (intruding only where there is a problem); however, my leaders were highly visible and in charge at all times, not just when things went wrong.

From my brief survey of characteristics of leaders in business and industry, it is clear that, with the exception of having a longer time horizon, the education leaders in my study exhibited all the characteristics of high-achieving leaders in business. Principals were more similar than teachers, but this is understandable since it is necessary for teachers to work in a different style with immature students.

Given these findings, what are the implications for preparing teachers and principals for leadership roles? A number of national reports on the preparation of principals and teachers have been issued recently. Do these reports envision preparation programs that will foster the development of attributes that were evident in the leaders included in my study? It is to this question that I turn in the next chapter.

Recommendations for the Preparation of Teachers and Principals

In this chapter I review a number of recent reports containing recommendations for the preparation of school administrators and teachers and compare them with the behaviors and attitudes found in the teachers and principals in my study of extraordinary educators. In some instances, comparisons are difficult to make because the reports' recommendations are quite general, whereas the findings of my study are quite specific. For example, the major finding of my study is that these teachers, and to a lesser extent the principals, used a high number of correctives. The first set of reports deal with recommendations for the preparation of school principals; the second set deal with the preparation of teachers.

Recommendations for the Preparation of Principals

Leaders for America's Schools by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration. The Commission recommends that preparation should be organized around five strands:

1. The study of administration
2. The study of the technical core of educational administration and the acquisition of vital administrative skills
3. The application of research findings and methods to problems
4. Supervised practice
5. Demonstration of competence

These recommendations are so general that it is impossible to tell what is intended. With the possible exception of #2, the recommendations would seem to go little beyond current practice in the preparation of school administrators.

Skills for Successful School Leaders by Hoyle, English, and Steffy. The authors describe eight skills they believe candidates for school administration posts should possess:

1. Skills in designing, implementing, and evaluating the school climate
2. Skills in building support for schools
3. Skills in developing school curriculum
4. Skills in instructional management
5. Skills in staff evaluation
6. Skills in staff development
7. Skills in allocating resources
8. Skills in educational research, evaluation, and planning

While all these skills may be desirable for principals to have, they were not pivotal in the effectiveness of the two principals in my study. In fact, the skills recommended in this report far exceed those exhibited by my two principals, who did very little with skills #3 through #8. The two principals I studied were doers. They had a clear vision of what their schools should be, translated this vision into goals, monitored progress toward those goals, supported their teachers in achieving those goals, nurtured a trust in people, cared deeply for others, set high expectations, and believed their associates were capable of far more than is typically expected.

Performance-Based Preparation of Principals by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. NASSP has been very active in developing and promoting an assessment-center approach to the preparation of principals. A number of centers have been established throughout the country, which have been quite influential. Below is a list of 12 skills that are the focus of the training at the centers:

1. Problem analysis
2. Judgment (includes "identifying educational needs and setting priorities")
3. Organizational ability
4. Decisiveness
5. Leadership (includes "getting others involved in solving problems")
6. Sensitivity (includes "skill in resolving conflicts")
7. Stress tolerance
8. Oral communication
9. Written communication
10. Range of interest
11. Personal motivation
12. Educational values (includes "possession of a well-reasoned educational philosophy")

In my judgment, the principals in my study possessed all of these "skills." But are they really skills? For example, are decisiveness, leadership, sensitivity, stress tolerance, and personal motivation skills; or are they personal attributes? By what stretch of the imagination can #12, "educational values," be called a skill?

Even conceding that they are skills, are they essential for greatness? The most enduring images of the leaders in my study were their belief in the potential in others, their deep caring, their demand for top performance, their great energy and persistence in pursuit of their vision, and their absolute certainty that it could be reached. One can imagine principals having the 12 assessment-center skills moving through their daily routine void of feeling, somewhat like Sartre's cafe waiter, "a little too precise, a little too rapid." By contrast, the leaders in my study were passionate in pursuit of their vision.

Recommendations for the Preparation of Teachers*

Tomorrow's Teachers: A Report of the Holmes Group by the Holmes Group. This report calls for the elimination of undergraduate teacher education programs; the requirement of an undergraduate academic major; a closer collaboration between colleges of education, the public schools, and the university at large; and a three-tier system of licensing. To reach the highest tier, career professional, a doctorate in the subject would be required (or demonstrated high achievement in the study of and practice of one's discipline).

A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. This report also calls for the abolishment of undergraduate teacher education and the creation of a Master in Teaching degree program. However, the report is mute on the curriculum of that program except to say that, "Teachers need a command of the subjects they teach, techniques of teaching those subjects, research on teaching, children's growth and development and their differing needs and learning styles." The report calls for the establishment of a National Board of Professional Teaching Standards to certify teachers, "basing its assessment on a determination of what teachers need to know and what they should be able to do." It calls for greater teacher and principal autonomy at the building level on matters of curriculum and instruction but provides no specific statement of how broad that automony might be.

Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education by the National Governors' Association Center for Policy Research and Analysis. As in the reports reviewed above, this report avoids specific recommendations. Rather, it calls for defining the body of professional knowledge and practice that teachers must have, restructuring the existing teacher education program (graduate level, academic ma-

*Since the recommendations in the reports on teacher preparation are quite similar, comparisons with the findings of my study will be made at the end of this chapter.

jor, performance-based clinical experience), and encouraging professional school environments in which teachers have more latitude in what and how to teach, but holding them accountable.

Excellence in Our Schools: Teacher Education, An Action Plan by the National Education Association. In contrast to the reports reviewed above, this report is quite specific in its recommendations. It is organized around three functions: Facilitating Learning, Managing the Classroom, and Making Professional Decisions. Each of these three functions is followed by 26 samples of actions that teachers take to carry them out (for example, "Know the unique characteristics of their students and draw on this knowledge to promote learning"). These in turn are followed by 48 learnings and skills (for example, "Knowledge of instructional design and technology").

Comparisons of Teacher Preparation Reports with Extraordinary Educators Study

In what ways do the recent reports on teacher preparation reflect the kind of knowledge and skills observed in the teachers who were the subject of this study? The recommendation that an undergraduate academic major be required and that teacher education be moved to the graduate level would appear to be supported by my study. My teachers were without doubt experts in their disciplines. However, it was a very special expertise: they knew their discipline from a performance aspect, which then led back to academic understandings by the students, who understood what they were doing and why. The implication from my study is that if an academic major is to help teachers teach, they must have many more opportunities to experience the discipline (for example, English majors must have many opportunities to analyze poems, not simply memorize what literary critics have said about them). To use such an approach, academic majors would have to gather evidence, make inferences, and draw conclusions – in short, to think critically about their discipline. This is a

far cry from what currently constitutes study in an academic major in many colleges and universities.

The specific skills and learnings cited in the NEA report, *Excellence in Our Schools*, may represent the cutting edge in research on teaching effectiveness; but they most decidedly do not reflect what the teachers in my study were doing. Indeed, if judged by the NEA criteria, they were not very good teachers. Rather, they engaged in a fairly limited repertoire of behaviors (issuing correctives, diagnosing what students could do, insisting on perfection, providing support and encouragement, and so forth). Rather than skills or techniques, the most powerful factors in these teachers' success was their unswerving belief in the potential of their students and their ability to communicate this belief in powerful and convincing ways.

The recommendation that a longer and more intensive clinical experience would improve teacher preparation bears scrutiny. While it is true that one needs practice to improve instructional strategies, it is also true that many of the supervising teachers under whom this clinical practice would take place expect only average performance from the majority of their students. Such clinical experience may produce adequate teachers of good students, but it will not produce great teachers of *all* students. Without exemplary models or mentors in the clinical setting, preservice teachers are not going to be helped much by a longer clinical experience.

The final suggestion that teachers and principals have wide latitude in what is taught and how it is taught, and be accountable for the results, would seem to be be supported by the findings in my study. None of the teachers was following a packaged curriculum or using cookbook pedagogy.

Epilogue

As I reflect on my study of extraordinary educators, my thoughts turn to . . .

On Being Ordinary

As I mulled over the findings of my study, I again thought about those girls in Greenup County, Kentucky, who won the national cheerleading championships. These rural girls (and presumably any other rural girls similarly situated) had within them the latent potential to compete successfully at the national level. What made the difference was that their leader (and the leaders in my study) recognized this potential and relentlessly pressed the girls to develop it far beyond what even the girls thought they could do. In carrying out my study, I witnessed the realization of such potential when I heard a choir of very ordinary students produce glorious sounds, and when I listened to a very average student deliver an impassioned and compelling speech that he had composed. My point is simply this: If the terms "ordinary" or "average" suggest that you can expect only a lackluster performance, then you greatly underestimate the potential in your students.

On Subculture

As I have further reflected on my study, I have wondered if the power of the leaders may be at least partly attributable to the subcul-

ture they create. Subcultures tend to establish norms quite different from the culture at large. This different set of norms helps to explain students' willingness to work so hard, to believe that they can excel, and to submit to the criticism necessary to achieve high levels of performance. It was noteworthy that even in the disciplines that stressed individual performance (art and speech), students functioned as a subculture unit, helping and supporting one another. The many references to "family" and the tendency of some students to refer to these leaders as "Dad" or "Mom" further suggests that some sort of subculture was created.

That an entire school can be a subculture of pride and accomplishment is suggested by the remark of a high school girl who said, "I used to be ashamed to tell people I went to (name of school); now I'm proud" (after the new principal arrived). Another girl said, "I can tell you what Mr. (name of principal) meant to me. When I came here, all I wanted to do was get married, drop out, and have a baby. Now I am going to Texas Tech and major in Business; I want to be an accountant." Nothing in that young woman's background predicted that choice, but the subculture of the school dictated it.

On Leaders' Beliefs

How did these leaders develop the conviction that there is enormous untapped potential in most students? How did they come to reject the concepts of "average" and "mediocrity" so pervasive in our schools and instead take average students to levels of achievement far beyond what was ever expected? While these questions go beyond the scope of this study, the work on transformational leadership (leaders who raise their followers to higher levels of morality and motivation) may be instructive here (Burns 1978; Bass 1985).

On Normal Curve

Most teachers have been exposed to the statistical concept of the normal curve in educational psychology or tests and measurement

courses. The concept is a useful one and does seem to hold true in a number of instances. For example, if a teacher were to measure the height, weight, or shoe size of all the teachers in his building, some would be at one end of the scale, some at the opposite end, and most would group toward the middle. The normal curve also seems to hold true for measures of intelligence, with average IQ falling between 90 and 110. With respect to learning content, the normal curve seems to hold true as well. When a teacher gives a test, usually some students do well, some poorly, and most fall in the middle. However, for the teachers in this study, the normal curve is a nonfunctional concept. Year after year from a random group of students, they elicited premiere performances and consistently won awards. Why? If ability falls within the normal curve construct, then why didn't the awards rotate from school to school in different communities? The answer lies in these teachers' refusal to view their pupils as "just average."

On Developing Excellent Teachers

The question persists: Are excellent teachers born or can they be developed? C. Tichy, a leading professor of business at Michigan State University, suggests that perhaps 20% of the knowledge, skill, and attitude needed for excellent leadership can be taught in preservice programs, with the other 80% being learned on the job (Main 1987). This would argue for a strong, focused staff development component for developing excellent teachers.

David Berliner has isolated certain characteristics of expert teachers, which he suggests can be taught. These include taking a quick reading of a class, starting with what kids know, acquiring a rich knowledge of subject matter, and establishing routines, among others. His observation that all of the expert teachers he identified had at least 10 years of experience would seem to lend support to Tichy's speculation that 80% of the skills, attitudes, and knowledge are learned on the job. A caveat here: the leaders in my study experienced suc-

cess early in their careers – some as early as the first year – and all had well-established reputations by their tenth year.

My own persuasion is that expertness can be developed. If the leaders in my study can bring relatively average students to high levels of performance, why cannot colleges of education bring ordinary college students to high levels of teaching excellence? Applying what I have learned from my study of leaders to the conduct of college courses in pedagogy, teachers of these courses would have to be demanding but at the same time exhibit caring and give students success experiences. Preservice students would have to have many opportunites to perform, with direct and frequent correctives from the instructor or supervising teacher. From the outset, excellence would be expected, even demanded. This would have to be balanced with frequent assurance to the students that they have the ability and are making progress. Preservice students would have to make a commitment to long hours of practice. Teamwork that fosters esprit de corps would need to be built in. Perhaps I am talking about a subculture here.

Competition proved to be an important factor for teachers and students alike in my study. One wonders if competition could be fostered. And there must be more caring in college and university teaching. Education professors, in particular, must care deeply that their charges develop into excellent teachers.

With this, then, I end. I believe we can develop the teachers/leaders we need. Now is the time to seize the initiative while change is in the air and before pat solutions have been frozen into place. My study suggests that the current recommendations for teacher and principal preparation programs may simply be more of what we had in the past. And that is not good enough.

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